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ABSTRACT

New developments and the future of correspondence teaching and correspondence education in Europe are discussed in this document. A questionnaire was used to gather information about changes which have taken place or future changes envisaged by correspondence school managers. It revealed that important developments included the introduction of correspondence study methods into the universities and colleges of the East European countries; and increased use of innovative teaching methods--programed instruction, computers, experiments with TV, radio, and integrated discussion groups. Uncertainty was expressed regarding the future of correspondence instruction because of interest of big firms and American corporations, and the trend towards centralization and concentration. For the future the writer foresaw accredited and efficient correspondence schools cooperating in many ways with universities and colleges, ministries of education and other state institutions, broadcasting corporations, and educational sciences. The cooperation would take many organizational forms that would cross interstate and national boundaries. Projects would make use of latest technological developments in their respective disciplines and the work would be guided by theories of distance and mass instruction. (PT)

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Otto Peters

NEW PERSPECTIVES IN CORRESPONDENCE STUDY IN EUROPE

- a paper submitted to the 8th Conference of the International Council on Correspondence Education in Paris, May 1969

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It is certainly an honour, a privilege and a pleasure talking to you about New Perspectives of European Correspondence Education. But it is also difficult.

I should like to mention only one difficulty. It refers to my title. I really think now that I should rephrase it and call it - using a term I found in one of Brian Jackson's articles - New Perspectives in European Distance Teaching, including also teaching by TV and radio.

Reflecting in this way does not mean that I want to depreciate teaching by correspondence. On the contrary, I believe that this particular method of distance teaching has not yet been exploited to the fullest extent. But to neglect the services of newer media and to stick to correspondence instruction alone, would be to indulge in the relative joy and comfort of a ride in a horse and carriage and to ignore the fine jet planes which have brought most of the delegates to this wonderful and gracious city.

Maybe, the fact that one can think about whether the term correspondence education should be changed is already indicative of a new perspective.

Compared to the situation four years ago correspondence education in Europe is much more in a state of transition, which might lead to thorough - that means structural - changes. In 1965 our ICCE conference was mainly concerned with audio-visual aids and programmed instruction and developing countries, and not so much with changes which might become necessary in Europe. Today it is a little easier to discern new trends of distance teaching. I consider four of them to be most important.

(1) Some correspondence schools are beginning to realize that they - after many decades of growth within a traditional framework - will have to change their policy and methods.

(2) A number of universities are becoming interested in correspondence study and are even ready to conduct experiments in it.

(3) There is already a number of large scale projects in distance teaching being planned and carried out by institutions such as state or regional educational authorities, universities and correspondence schools who are cooperating in a unique way.

(4) Educational scientists have become interested in the methods of teaching by correspondence and are now analysing the specific problems of distance teaching.

I am going to deal with these four trends as this seems to me the best way of describing the new perspectives in European Distance Teaching. The final objective of this paper will be to suggest that a <u>fifth perspective</u> will be of paramount importance: the combining and also - to a certain extent - the merging of these four trends.

CORRESPONDENCE STUDY

When preparing this paper, I sent a questionnaire to some sixty correspondence schools in most European countries in order to gather information about changes which have taken place in recent years or future changes already envisaged by correspondence school managers. Only 21 questionnaires were returned.

Analysing the answers the following changes are discernible:

(1) There seems to be an expansion of business in many schools.

(2) Certain elements can be identified with regard to the innovation of teaching methods:

a. More and more correspondence schools are beginning to use various forms of face-to-face teaching.

b. There is a slight progress in the application of programmed instruction.

c. One school reported the use of the computer for instructional purposes.

d. Two schools conduct experiments with TV, radio and integrated discussion groups

e. One school has improved the traditional methods of correspondence teaching by introducing three-dimensional vision providing purpose made spectacles and diagrams.

As to changes in the next ten to fifteen years already envisaged - the answer I liked best was a laconic one: "If I only knew!". - Three schools believed that their programme will not be basically different. The rest made guesses referring to an extension in the use of tape, disc

and video tape, a closer liaison with state authorities, the use of correspondence instruction to improve primary, secondary and adult education and the utilization of correspondence courses by public schools as text books. One school believed that there will be a gradual and steady decrease in the importance of traditional correspondence instruction.

Many answers to the question as to future developments are disappointingly vague and superficial. On the one hand, they indicate a lack of orientation, and of commitment, and partly even - as one might suspect - a sense of insecurity. This is understandable - as, in fact, nobody knows how things might develop. On the other hand, there is the intense feeling that now more than ever before is it more important to know and to plan in advance.

Three new elements might add to the insecurity: (1) The recent interest of big publishing firms in correspondence instruction, (2) the appearance of big American corporations on the market, and (3) a trend towards centralization and concentration.

Maybe a prediction of Robert Allen about American correspondence schools will also come true for Europe. According to him the big companies will buy up more and more of the smaller successful schools, and even these large correspondence schools will become part of bigger organizations, including publishing firms and computer manufacturers. And they again will become international in scope.

With these developments in mind it is understandable that many correspondence schools do not know where they might stand in ten or fifteen years. Nevertheless, I should like

to try to point to possible future developments and changes. Analysing the present state changes in the correspondence school market which are perceivable or have even taken place already I can imagine that correspondence schools might develop in the following directions:

(1) They might become active in the text-book business - as many of them have developed considerable skill in making a printed text teach. In this they could probably outdo traditional text book authors. I wish they would, as the traditional public schools are desparately in need of printed material for the instruction of small groups at different levels and for individuals. Perhaps it is significant that Hermods in Malmö is now no longer only a correspondence school - but also a foundation for the production of educational material. -

(2) They might become firms rendering special educational services to business-concerns and public institutions, developing new courses only if the latter are prepared to pay the developing costs. Tendencies of this kind can be seen in the Leidsche Onderwijsinstellingen in Holland. Quite often these correspondence schools will offer their services in conjunction with advice given to firms in order to improve their efficiency.

(3) They might become schools which cooperate in many ways with institutions of the traditional public school systems, especially with local institutions of adult education. New developments of this kind can be seen in England and in the Federal Republic.

(4) By working together with radio and television correspondence schools might become able to offer the

didactical know-how - the precious soft-ware - to future multi media teaching systems. According to the material I could get the most active correspondence school in trying to develop new instructional methods of this kind is the National Extension College in Cambridge. What is more, they have published reports on their experiences. Also Hermods has acquired considerable experience along these lines.

Here, perhaps, is where correspondence schools can make most important contribution towards the solution of instructional problems. It is a very specific service, namely: the development of effective and sophisticated and flexible feedback systems which motivate, guide and activate students as individuals ans assess their achievement - whether the groups are of 10, 20, or 40,000. This is the very domain of correspondence schools - and I cannot see that their services will not be sought - if they are really developed on a sound professional basis - that ist, with insight in and understanding of the principles of modern educational technology. As Börje Holmberg said in his latest book: The time of amateurs - even of gifted ones - is now past.

ACADEMIC CORRESPONDENCE STUDY

The most important development - which was, by the way, entirely neglegted at our last ICCE-conference in Stockholm - was the introduction of correspondence study methods in the universities and colleges of East European countries in the fifties. Delegates coming from other continents will find the number of university correspondence students extremely high in these countries. They will be surprised to learn that here correspondence students constitute roughly 25 to 50 per cent of the student body. At present in the German Democratic Republic 162 subject areas can be studied by correspondence.

These correspondence students are fully-fledged members of their universities and colleges, as correspondence study has been fully integrated into the administrative patterns and teaching techniques. The correspondence students do not take courses on a semester basis - as for instance most correspondence students in the United States do - but full length courses of five to six years' duration comprising a full academic training. Their correspondence study includes annual study periods of three to four weeks at the university, and additional regional tutorials are partly optional and partly obligatory.

I am sure that these new forms of academic correspondence study and the experiences gained by the universities and colleges in East European countries will exercise a distinct influence on the future development of European correspondence study as a whole.

These countries have tested a number of advantages of correspondence instruction and have managed to achieve the following:

- The number of students could be considerably increased.

- They could cope with the problems of sudden demands on manpower,

- New forms of methods of higher learning could be developed by combining elements of correspondence study and traditional academic teaching, and - what is even more important - by combining practical work in the production process and academic study.

As we have become aware of the necessity of learning's being a life-long process, this integration of practical and theoretical work might - any ideology apart - serve as a model for adult education processes in general. -

The second important development is that in recent years some West European universities have become interested in the new method of correspondence instruction, especially in Sweden, Norway, the Federal Republic, and England.

In Sweden, university students are now allowed to make a partial study of 9 subjects by means of correspondence and additional summer courses. At the same time the authorities have also developed an academic correspondence study for the up-grading of teachers. In 1965 more than 8,000 students took part in these studies. These progressive changes in the methods of University teaching were initiated by Hermods - but at the same time the observers from other countries cannot but admire the readiness of Swedish School authorities radically to innovate their systems and to cooperate with correspondence schools.

In Norway academic correspondence courses were also developed by a correspondence school - by Norsk Korrespondanseskole. These courses have a limited, but nevertheless very interesting function. The various branches of the Norwegian secondary school prepare their students for entry into certain university departments only. If they change their mind while they are

studying - they have the possibility of taking additional correspondence courses to prepare themselves for study at the new department. -

In The Netherlands the Leidsche Onderwijsinstellingen is pioneering the introduction of correspondence instruction into the realm of higher education. This institute has developed courses in Law, Economics and Technical sciences for the first years of study. The new feature of Dutch correspondence study adds to the wealth of experience gathered by Dutch correspondence schools in the training and further education of teachers.

In the Federal Republic of Germany the development of academic correspondence study has not yet gone as far as in the other countries mentioned. Thorough and methodical as the Germans are supposed to be, they have first established an institute to find out whether academic correspondence study really works. In a way, however, by establishing this institute, they are at the same time ahead of others. For if there is one decisive drawback in correspondence study, it is the lack of continuous and consistent research on a high level.

The Institute I am speaking of is the German Institute of ~~Correspondence Study~~ DISTANT STUDY. It is located in Tübingen (near Stuttgart) and connected to the University of Tübingen. It has three tasks:

- to investigate the possibilities of an academic correspondence study,

- to set up models for this and

- to coordinate all activities in the field of academic correspondence study in the Federal Republic

So far the Institute has - in order to fulfill these tasks - turned out three books on academic correspondence study by

GÜNTHER DOHMEN and KARLHEINZ REBEL. Just now it is developing study material for the advanced training of teachers in nine school subjects. An English course for teachers of English has already started. Later on the Institute will, I think, develop three categories of academic correspondence courses

- introductory courses of about one year's length

- courses which enable working adults to qualify for professional jobs

- academic refresher courses.

Just in order to demonstrate how attractive the idea of academic correspondence study has become in Europe, let me finally refer to the Open University in England. This new and unconventional academic institution is to provide opportunities at both undergraduate and post-graduate level. Here correspondence courses will be closely integrated with radio and television tution and short residential courses. The report of the planning committee, issued four months ago, stresses that "broadcasting can be used as a component part of a fully integrated teaching system", and that the Open University "can make the best authorities and best expositors universally available, and thereby "serve as an incomparably rapid means for the diffusion of the latest knowledge and ideas". The first Vice Chancellor, Professor Walter Perry, took up his appointment in January 1969, and the development of an entirely new organisational set-up is under way. The first courses will start in January 1971.

What will happen if these trends of distance teaching become stronger in the years to come? So far, I can see five perspectives.

1. It might become possible also in West European universities to offer tuition to a greater number of students by utilizing the resources of universities and colleges in a more rationalized way,

2. It will become necessary to rethink and to reevaluate academic methods of teaching and thus pave the way for instructional innovations.

3. The academic teaching process can be made more objective and thus it might become possible to control and improve it by applying scientific methods.

4. The institutes of higher learning could lose much of their, and here I quote Davon Baron, "dignified academic exclusiveness, their secluded atmosphere and circumscribed forms and conventions". - Their teaching processes could be open to public control. Thus, they will become more democratic.

5. Academic knowledge and academic teaching will easily transgress the artificial boundaries of countries, and states within these countries. This might put an end to academic regionalism and provincialism.

Maybe, the ICCE will become a platform where correspondence study experts of East and West European universities may exchange their views. I believe that all universities participating in activities of this kind will profit a great deal, by such a form of international cooperation.

TEACHING SYSTEMS

The third chain of events which is indicative of new perspectives in correspondence instruction on this continent comprises large scale experiments in distance teaching utilizing the extraordinary possibilities of mass media such as radio and television as teaching devices.
In my manuscript I have referred to

(1) TELESCUOLA in Italy. In 1963/64 it taught about 50 000 students by regular courses of lower secondary schools.

(2) The Bavarian TELEKOLLEG. Presently it teaches about 5000 students in courses of a part time vocational charader.

(3) The QUADRIGA-FUNKKOLLEG - a radio college course organized by the broadcasting organizations of four states of the Federal Republic in conjunction with the German Institute of Academic Correspondence Study. Just now it has started an introductory course of Educational Sciences to more than 10 000 students.

(4) The RADIO-TELEBAC of the French Ministry of Education, consisting of radio and television broadcasts which helped about 40 000 students to prepare themselves for a second trial to pass their Baccalaureat examination.

(5) Projects of the University of Nottingham and the National Extension College in cooporation with the Television Broadcasting Corporations in England.

(6) So far the most sophisticated teaching system in Europe is - as I see it - the DELTA PROJECT which is being developed by the Swedish National Board of Education in cooperation with Hermods and the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, and which will start this autumn. It is a course in New Mathematics and its objective is to retrain about 40 000 teachers in the school system.

> The course is a well-balanced system combining various media with specific instructional functions. There are television units whose main purpose it is to motivate the teachers - to convince them that it is necessary to be retrained. There are radio transmissions (20 minutes units) teaching either theoretical parts or the methods of teaching New Mathematics. There are discussion groups with definite taks to be solved. There is carefully prepared printed material using correspondence instruction techniques for individual work and for illustration, while the teachers listen to the radio teaching units. There are possibilities for the teachers to put questions to be answered by radio, or by special consultants. Finally there is also a computer for the assessment of what the teaching system and the teachers have achieved.

What is new and progressive about these experiments ? In what way do they differ from other television or radio courses? They are, to start with, rigorously designed for a well defined target group - and not for a general audience. They are constructed according to clearly defined instructional objectives. They contain integrated schemes for the motivation of the students. They secure the active participation of the student by employing various methods, techniques and media, for instance, by organizing viewing or discussion groups. Oral and written examinations are part of the course - and usually these examinations are recognized by the authorities so that they are meaningful to the students. - In some cases these courses already demonstrate what can be achieved by applying the results of modern instructional theory to mass instruction and distance teaching.

Only one basic criticism may be mentioned. These distance teaching systems will never begin to tap their extraordi-

nary potential - as long as they have to imitate the forms of direct instructions after the pattern of traditional schools. These teaching systems will have to develop patterns of their own. Again, taking into consideration this particular criterion, the Swedish experiment seems to be the most advanced one in Europe.
It seems as if these first experiments in Europe have started a development which will lead to a permanent establishment of entirely new forms of teaching and partly supplement the traditional school system and partly also substitute it.

How important this new development of European correspondence education might become, can best be seen in the recent activities of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE. Its Council for Cultural Co-Operation has studied the problems of correspondence education for a number of years and has finally decided to concentrate its activities by supporting experiments with multi-media courses of the type I have mentioned. The Council has organized conferences of experts in Rome, Scheweningen and Stockholm and published surveys about these new experiments in Europe.

The Council of Europe hopes to bring about a closer cooperation of European countries in the planning and conducting of these multi media experiments in distance teaching. And one of their experts entertains also the admittedly vague, but nevertheless inspiring idea of concentration and centralization. As correspondence education transgresses national boundariesmore easily than traditional educational institutions do, it might become possible sometime in the future to establish three or four big correspondece teaching centres in Europe as a joint enterprise of all European nations - each centre serving students of one of the main language groups. Thus the most gifted and most knowledgeable professors and tea-

chers everywhere in Europe could be drawn upon - and by means of translations and synchronizations each citizen of Europe wherever he might live would have access to the best instruction possible on this continent.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS

A fourth trend can be seen in the slight increase of scholary studies of the instructional process in correspondence education. I refer to experts in Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and the German Demokratic Republic as well as to the "Berlin Studies" and the "Tübingen Studies". As I am best acquainted with the "Berlin Studies" let me summarize a few findings:

(1) It simply does not work when you try to apply traditional categories of accepted instructional theories to correspondence education. They were developed for describing oral and not for written instruction. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce new categories.

(2) Many surprising parallels can be diagnosed when you compare the process of correspondence instruction to the industrialized production process: Neither process can start without a previous period of careful planning by experts, and without specialization by division of labour, that is, by dividing the many functions of the teacher or the worker and assigning them to a number of specialists or machines. Both processes rely on the use of technical devices, machines and even computers , both apply the principles of assembly line and of mass production, both need and use scientific methods of controll in order to improve the teaching or production process while in operation.
In the terms of this comparison, correspondence instruction can be called the most industrialized form of in-

struction. It is much more progressive than nearly all classroom instruction, which - being, so to speak, the last stronghold of the manual trades - can be called a pre-industrial form of instruction.

(3) It is much easier to describe what correspondence instruction really means if you use categories taken from those sciences investigating the industrial production process.

(4) Parallel to mass production correspondence instruction and distance teaching in general are forms of mass instruction.

For thousands of years the first and only form of oral instruction was probably the dialogue - if not the monologue. Much later came the instruction of groups, the teaching of classes, the first rationalizing and economizing in instruction. But - most of you will agree - so far, we have not jet managed to practise successful instructional techniques to cater for extremely large groups. - We have to adjust ourselves to the new technical media which makes mass instruction possible, but at the same time make drastic demands on our didactic ingenuity.

Marshall McLuhan observed that when man is given a new effective medium he becomes fascinated by this extension of himself, - but - as Narcissus in the Greek myth - at the same time it involves him in a state of numbness.
We are still in this state of fascination and numbness. We have to find a new equilibrium. Meanwhile we make the mistake of transplanting the instructional techniques of the monologue and the dialogue and of classroom teaching into distance teaching and mass instruction. Could it not be much more reasonable to borrow

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new forms of imparting knowledge from other mass media, like, for instance, newspapers, magazines, films, radic broadcasts and TV programmes ? Could it not be that sound principles of journalism might help us in devising new and effective methods for mass instruction?

Problems of this kind will be studied in the years to come. Maybe it is possible to develop a progressive theory of correspondence instruction along these lines as Roy B. Minnis considered to be necessary in Stockholm. Maby such a theory helps us to plan, to design, to improve and to criticize projects of distance teaching in a more rational way.

CONCLUSION

Let me - as I mentioned at the beginning of this paper - conclude with a more general perspective of European distance teaching which will integrate the four perspectives I have sketched in my paper.

I forsee accredited and efficient correspondence schools cooperating in many ways with universities and colleges, ministries of education and other state institutions, broadcasting cooperations, and educational sciences. This cooperation will take many organizational forms, but whatever these forms will be, there will be a strict interdependence between the groups mentioned, and all projects will be centralized. Many of them will transgress interstate and even national boundaries. Each project will be considered a new experiment in the application of the technology of instruction, that means, that the planning, organizing, evaluating and improving of these teaching systems is carried out by professionals in accordance with the latest developments in their respective scientific disciplines. Their work will be guided by progressive theories of distance teaching and mass instruction.

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By a growing integration of refined and tested methods of correspondence instruction , of new efforts in academic correspondence study, of multi mass media teaching techniques and of a consistent research on new theoretical foundations of correspndence instructions- much can be attained. By joining the experience, the inventiveness, the ingenuity and the talents of those experts who so far have worked in these four rather isolated fields of educational activity an unprecedented intensity of instruction can be achieved.

Furthermore, by integrating these four developments of distance teaching it will become possible to equalize educational opportunity to a degree never attained before. In very much the same way as it has become possible to democratize high quality entertainment by utilizing technical media - everybody can listen to top singers and can watch top dancers and actors now - it will become possible to democratize high quality teaching. Thus, high quality teaching will be accessible on many levels for everybody whereever he lives - and will no longer be limited to certain places and to certain persons. Again you have a parallel to the industrial production process which so changed the distribution of industrial products that it is possible nowadays to buy high quality products wherever you live.

The unlimited accessibility to high quality education is the general perspective of distance teaching which I should like to predict in my paper.

Thank you very much for listening and for your kind attention. It is a real pleasure to meet so many friends who have helped me so much and so often by answering my "inquisitive" letters. On the occasion of this 8th ICCE Conference, I should like to express my appreciation and my gratitude to you for your assistence and cooperation.
Tank you very much indeed.